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DE RUEHSQ #0953/01 3411319
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY SKOPJE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6781
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE 0118
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHPS/USOFFICE PRISTINA 4361
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SKOPJE 000953

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/07/2017

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SUBJECT: MACEDONIA-KOSOVO BORDER DEMARCATION: GOOD FENCES
MAKE GOOD NEIGHBORS

REF: 2006 PRISTINA 1121

Classified By: P/E CHIEF SHUBLER, REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D).

SUMMARY

11. (C) Macedonia will recognize and support Kosovo independence provided two critical conditions are met in any final status arrangement: 1.) demarcation of the Macedonia-Kosovo border proceeds as set forth in the 2001 Belgrade-Skopje agreement and reaffirmed by the UNSC, and 2.) no division, addition, or other alteration of Kosovo's territory. As the USG moves forward with decisions regarding Kosovo independence, it will be critical to Macedonia's stability for us to reaffirm the validity of the 2001 border accord, and to ensure Pristina is committed to demarcating the border -- as a technical matter -- on the basis of that agreement as part of any final status arrangement. End summary.

MACEDONIAN SUPPORT FOR TIMELY RESOLUTION OF KOSOVO STATUS,
AHTISAARI PLAN

12. (C) Macedonia's leaders support resolving Kosovo's status sooner, rather than later. Strong supporters of the Ahtisaari plan, they also consistently underscore their commitment to the Contact Group guiding principle of "no changes in borders." Implicit in that commitment is their insistence that their border with Kosovo eventually will be demarcated in accordance with the 2001 Belgrade-Skopje border agreement, an internationally accepted and UN-endorsed agreement which delineated the border.

KOSOVARS DO NOT ACCEPT VALIDITY OF 2001 AGREEMENT

13. (C) Kosovars rejected the 2001 agreement because it was concluded with Belgrade, without Kosovar participation, and because it netted Macedonia a small wedge of Kosovar territory in the process. Skopje is eager to resolve the technical demarcation issue in order to facilitate more effective patrolling of the currently porous border. The GOM also wants to move forward on demarcation in order to avoid giving Pristina a chance to reopen negotiations on the border delineation, which Skopje believes could lead to destabilizing challenges to Macedonia's territorial integrity.

AHTISAARI PLAN AND DEMARCATION BASED ON 2001 AGREEMENT

14. (C) At the end of 2006, a joint cable from U.S. Office Pristina and Embassy Skopje (reftel) outlined the arguments and recommendations for ensuring Kosovo would accept, as part of the Ahtisaari final status package, border demarcation based on the 2001 Belgrade-Skopje agreement. As we later understood it, that goal was achieved in the Ahtisaari plan. At that time, the GOM anticipated a UNSCR would set forth Kosovo's final status and would refer explicitly to the 2001 Belgrade-Skopje agreement as the basis for demarcation. With a UNSCR now unlikely, we believe it is again essential to take concrete steps to ensure any final status settlement explicitly refers to border demarcation on the basis of the 2001 agreement between Belgrade and Skopje, and commits Pristina to that position.

RECOGNITION AND DEMARCATION -- AN IMPLICIT LINK

15. (C) Macedonia will follow the US and EU lead in timing its decision to recognize an independent Kosovo, but the government does not want to be in the vanguard of recognizing states. It also does not want to be among the last to recognize, acknowledging that its relationship with Pristina should start off on the right foot. Implicit in the GOM position, however, is the notion that, after Macedonian recognition takes place, the Kosovar side will proceed with technical demarcation of the border based on the 2001 agreement. Should Pristina attempt to reopen before then the question of delineating the border, based on the 1974 agreement establishing the administrative boundary line between then-Yugoslav Serbia and Macedonia, for example, Skopje almost certainly would delay, if not withhold, recognition. That outcome would open opportunities for those

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seeking to destabilize Kosovo-Macedonia relations.

WAY FORWARD

6 (C) Per earlier exchanges while the Ahtisaari process was active, we -- and the Macedonians -- understood the Kosovar side had accepted that Kosovo-Macedonia border demarcation would take place based on the 2001 agreement. If the Ahtisaari Plan remains the explicit basis for a CDI, then the border issue will have been properly addressed. If not, then we believe that any Kosovo final status arrangement must include explicit acceptance by the Kosovar side, and internationally, of demarcation of the Kosovo-Macedonia border based on the 2001 Belgrade-Skopje agreement.

17. (U) This message has been coordinated with U.S. Office Pristina.
MILOVANOVIC